

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

PUBLIC HEARING

on

Agency Budget Oversight:

State Board of Education (SBOE)

Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education (OMB)

Office of the Student Advocate (OSA)

DC State Athletics Association (DCSAA)

Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)

University of the District of Columbia (UDC)

Public Charter School Board (PCSB)

on

Friday, April 5, 2024 at 10:30 a.m.

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Robert Henderson. I am here in my individual capacity as Ward 5 member of the State Board of Education, and I am not representing the views of the Board as a whole.

I'd like to start with my appreciation for the preservation of the Special Education HUB and the shift of that office's funding to come fully through the State Board of Education. The SPED HUB does extensive community engagement and offers much needed supports to families seeking to understand and access resources for students with special needs. It is well worth the continued investment and is now rightly positioned within an independent agency. I hope that this investment will be coupled with improvements in DC's capacity to serve special education students.

It is this shift in funding into SBOE that explains the increased funding that you see. The State Board remains a small but mighty agency. I strongly support the testimony that you will hear from State Board President Thompson regarding the need to protect the independence of the State Board in the budgeting process and, in particular want to highlight the State Board's request for funding for an agency human resources position, the absence of which has caused delays in filling positions over the past year.

I also ask the council to preserve the funding in the proposed budget for the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Student Advocate. These offices are deeply engaged with the public and are providing essential assistance to families and students.

Finally, I reached out to Ward 5 school leaders in preparation for this hearing and the main concerns shared with by charter sector leaders were about maintaining the facilities allowance for charter schools and about safety around schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions.

Robert Henderson

Ward 5 Member, State Board of Education